

New York Theatre Critics' Reviews 1947

Volume VIII, Number 9

Rachel W. Coffin, Editor

Week of May 5, 1947

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1947 PRODUCTIONS

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THEATRE OPENINGS

"Heads or Tails" "A Young Man's Fancy"
"Miracle in the Mountains"
"The Medium" and "The Telephone"

Theatre Critics Reviews brings you each week the complete reviews as they
originally appeared in these New York newspapers

NEW YORK JOURNAL-AMERICAN NEW YORK WORLD-TELEGRAM
NEW YORK DAILY NEWS NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE
NEW YORK MIRROR NEW YORK NEWSPAPER PM
NEW YORK SUN NEW YORK POST NEW YORK TIMES

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May 5, 1947

Pulitzer Awards for 1946

For Distinguished Correspondence

BROOKS ATKINSON

New York Times

For his articles on Russia

For An Original American Play

NO AWARD

"Heads or Tails"

The Sun

MAY 3, 1947

'Heads or Tails' Slips Into the Cort; It's Awful, Season's Very Worst.

By WARD MOREHOUSE.

"Heads or Tails" is the season's very worst, a little horror that found its way, inexplicably enough, to the stage of the Cort Theater last night. It is, actually, the most utterly inept piece of nothing at all that has been given a Broadway production since "Hairpin Harmony" came our way.

H. J. Lengsfelder and Ervin Drake are the unabashed authors of "Heads or Tails" and Your Theatre, Inc., admits sponsorship. Unsuspecting subscriber-backers of this new organization are hereby urged, on the basis of "Heads or Tails," to ask for their investments back—and quick!

The so-called play that Lengsfelder and Drake have put together is all about a diplomat, out of a job, who makes a pledge to commit suicide on losing the toss of a coin, and the efforts of a lot of people, including some insurance men, to prevent him from doing it.

The writing in the Cort's exhibit is frightful. The acting is worse than you'll ever see upon a summer-theater stage, and some-

body in Watson Barratt's workshop must have thought up the hideous scenery when the boss wasn't looking.

"Heads or Tails" is such a shocking gimcrack that I'm now inclined to apologize for remarks made in this space about "The Bees and the Flowers," an early-season transient upon the same stage. That comedy, by comparison, was a wonder work.

Lee Shubert, the Cort's landlord, left last night after Act One. His lawyer was with him.



NEW YORK
Herald Tribune

MAY 3, 1947.

'Heads or Tails' Presented at the Cort

By Otis L. Guernsey Jr.

The season's nadir in comic invention was reached last night with "Heads or Tails," an H. J. Lengsfelder-Ervin Drake script sponsored by an organization called Your Theatre, Inc., at the Cort Theater. Its point of departure was a suicide bet made between a diplomat and a stockbroker because of some silliness about both being in love with the same woman. Upon this was built a tedious, inert farce salted with witless gags about suicide, romance and the political situation in Washington. The staging by Edward F. Cline was flat and ill-timed, putting the play on with contortion rather than movement. The cast, headed by Jed Prouty, Les Tremayne, Audra Lindley and Werner Klemperer, was not entirely blameless, though perhaps less so than the rest of the production. It is said that the general public helped to produce "Heads or Tails," with percentages of the show going to some 3,000 early ticket buyers. It was, indeed, a wholly unprofessional segment of theater.

Journal American

MAY 3, 1947

No Hit—Critic Runs!

"HEADS OR TAILS" at the Theatre presented Friday, May 2, 1947, by Your Theatre, Incorporated, in association with the-atre-going public; directed by H. J. Lengsfelder and Ervin Drake; scenario by Edward F. Cline; settings by William Barrett; lighting by Lee Scott; costumes by Alice Gibson; electric equipment by Bayview; flowers by Universal Flower Co.; jewelry by Gary; military by Robert Dwyer; handkerchiefs by Knickerbocker; by J. E. Smith; stockings by Joseph Shapert; hairbrushes by Helman; Hospital; California Co.

THE CAST:

Caroline F. Shubert	Les Tremayne
John Shubert	Leslie Wells
Barbara Jones	Audra Lindley
Frank Jones	Werner Klemperer
Marion Gilman	Leslie Wells
Alfred Hilliard	Joe Cobb
Philip Hilliard	Joe Cobb
Barney McGill	Leslie Wells
Eric Peterson	Werner Klemperer
Mrs. Warren	Leslie Wells
Frank Hilliard	Joe Cobb
Mr. Green	Leslie Wells
Samuel Cushman	Frank de Kova
Samuel Cushman	Richard Barrow
Richard Barrow	Paul Lipson

ACT I.

Scene 1—Tremayne of country home of Caroline Shubert. Saturday morning.

Scene 2—Barrow McGill's office. Several days later.

ACT II.

Scene 1—Tremayne. Afternoon of same day.

Scene 2—Hilliard. Night. Same. Wednesday evening.

ACT III.

The terrace. 12th day of month, late afternoon.

Theater. Understudy by Grace Graham. Hall indicated by red lights sign posted and two every directed back to street. Police called to take seats and wrap with them.

Scene physician, Dr. E. A. Cavanah.

By ROBERT GARLAND

No!

DAILY NEWS

MAY 3, 1947

'Heads or Tails,' Profit-Sharing Play, a Net Loss for 3,000 Angels

By JOHN CHAPMAN

"Heads or Tails" is the play with 3,000 angels—and you could write it on the head of a pin. This little nightmare was presented last evening at the Cort Theatre by, according to the program, "Your Theatre, Inc., in association with the theatre-going public."

As drama page readers must have learned in the last year or so, somebody got the fascinating idea of financing a play without going to Howard S. Cullinan. The public would be the backers. Anybody who bought a ticket for a performance, before production started, would become a stockholder. If he

bought two tickets he was twice as big a stockholder. If "Heads or Tails" should be a hit, he would not only see it but also collect dividends on his stubs.

Good News, Sort Of.

I can offer a cheerful message this morning to the 3,000 stockholders, including a gentleman from the Bronx who wrote me two

days ago. "Please give us a fair break since I need a few dollars profit very badly." The good news is this: I have consulted with the office financial expert and he says it will be all right to write off the cost of tickets as a capital loss on next year's income tax return.

This is unique, revolutionary and something to be fostered. If all the people who have bought tickets to all the turkeys on Broadway could claim a loss on the income tax the savings would be fantastic.

But all the turkeys on Broadway can't compete with "Heads or

Tails." It is a very special case, not alone financially but artistically as well. It probably is the World's Worst Play. The program says it is a farce. If so, then World War II was the funniest thing since "Three Men on a Horse."

All About Suicide.

The plot has something to do with a State Department career man who makes a gentleman's agreement to commit suicide on account of woman trouble. Some of the cast are in favor of this move, and others are against it. The againers win, of course, because farces have to have pleasant endings. Personally, I am in favor of the suicide as a merciful release from all those bum jokes, which must have been copied word for word from a 1928 copy of College Humor.

As is becoming the custom of this gentle and loving department, I shall not single out for mention any of the wretched, dejected actors involved. After all, as somebody is always saying, actors have to eat. (But do they, really?) The authors are H. J. Lengsfelder and Ervin Drake.

"Heads or Tails"—continued

The New York Times

MAY 3, 1947

Bears Raid Market

By BROOKS ATKINSON

For two years H. J. Lengsfelder, co-author of "Head or Tail," has been developing a plan by which the ticket-buyer can share in the profits of Broadway productions. According to the program at the Cort, where the first production opened last evening, 142 church and civic organizations have invested in this easy plan, and more than 3,000 individuals. One of the subscribers, who is already worrying about his investment, reports that the investors are ten times that number. He writes to the drama desk that "I and 30,000 others will share the profits. Please

give the play a break since I need the few dollars profits very badly," he asks. Since Broadway has already devised many plans by which the ticket-buyer shares in the losses of plays, Mr. Lengsfelder's plan has a certain novelty.

Unfortunately there is no novelty in "Heads or Tails," which Mr. Lengsfelder and Ervin Drake have written in collaboration. It is a silly, haphazard comedy that would have looked like a poor risk in a stock company before the first World War. There may have been worse plays this year, but none that has been so elaborately chuckle-headed. As entertainment, "Heads or Tails" is inferior to "Tenting Tonight," which is using a misleading quotation from this column in its promotion. Smart operators should hedge against possible losses in "Heads or Tails" by plunging in "Born Yesterday" or "Happy Birthday," which should offer stiffer resistance to bear raids at the end of the season. Anyway, sell out at the top of the bulge.

New York Post

MAY 3, 1947

A Harsh Word for a New Play

By Richard Watts Jr.

What took place at the Cort Theatre last night was rather historic, in a repulsive way. It is not because "Heads or Tails," by two worthies named H. J. Lengsfelder and Ervin Drake, was produced by a new sort of theatrical organization called Your Theatre, Inc., which talks a lot of flubdubbery about making every ticket-purchaser (count them!) a stockholder in the enterprise. It certainly isn't because there is any merit in the farce about insurance salesmen, suicide and a career diplomat who sees the evil of his ways and resigns from the foreign service. It is merely that "Heads or Tails" happens to be not only the worst play seen on Broadway this season but the most dismal mess

encountered in the vicinity in approximately a decade.

Not being terrified by superlatives, I can go farther than that. The Lengsfelder-Drake nonsense offers the worst writing, the most dismal striving after hilarity, the most unalluring cast, the shoddiest direction and the most unattractive settings of the year.



New York World-Telegram

MAY 3, 1947

'Head or Tail' Not Worth Toss of Coin

By WILLIAM HAWKINS.

Your Theater is not my theater. Your Theater, Inc., is an organization which backs its productions through the advance sale of tickets to subscribers who by virtue of their purchase become backers.

These subscribers could never in their wildest dreams have sus-

pected that they would be foisting upon themselves anything like "Heads or Tails," the organization's first production.

It is difficult to judge either script or acting, as each is so bad it might be spoiling the other.

Series of Stale Gags.

The general impression of the play is that an old-fashioned mechanical farce idea has been used to string out a series of gags which have been deleted from radio scripts. They would only have been considered for very ordinary soap operas, except for two or three rocks, and were undoubtedly rejected because they were overworked the year after vaudeville was first thought of.

The few point lines that stray from this classification are too embarrassing for the air. The same holds true for the theater.

Roughly speaking "Heads or Tails" has to do with a diplomat about to be divorced from his Dulcy wife. His rival for a new love wins a bet by which he agrees to suicide.

Mother-in-Law Insures Him.

At the same time his mother-in-law insures his life for a quarter of a million dollars, and the insurance agent personally guarantees an arrangement which voids the usual suicide clause.

The inevitable complications are obvious.

Most of the cast behaves as if it had approached the microphone for the first time. There is ample use of voice to express meaning, but the movement is as strained and awkward as an untaped bunch of asparagus stalks learning to walk for Disney.

The not unpleasant sets are as bare as cells, and are lighted with what seems to be acetylene flares. This may be a matter of economy, but the direction fills the sets with no human warmth.

Pauses Between Lines.

There are pauses between lines and bits of business which, if added together, would allow time to see a double feature movie in the same evening with comfort.

It would seem the better part of

charity to leave the players anonymous. Of them all, Werner Klemperer as a Danish art professor brings a clumsy charm of buffoonery to his role, and attracts sympathy.

Audra Lindley makes the wife languidly human, though it is embarrassing to have to tell her.

Lula Belle Clarke as the maid sounds as if she might be quite amusing with some funny lines.

Little to Laugh At.

The audience of backers found little to laugh at during the acts, but applauded valiantly if in stunned confusion at the finish.

Your Theater, Inc., sounded like an interesting proposition with its plan to let the audience in on the profits of a series of plays. Unfortunately being a subscriber must make one feel after "Heads or Tails" a little like having signed a chain letter or having joined the Shifters.

For this is just the kind of intolerable bumbling in the theater that sends audiences screaming to the neighborhood picture houses.

Daily Mirror

MAY 3, 1947

'Heads or Tails' Is Dud as Drama

By ROBERT COLEMAN

The Drama Critics Circle should have postponed awarding its annual prizes for a couple of weeks. This would have given it the opportunity of bestowing a booby prize, or at least a citation, upon "Heads or Tails" as the worst play of this or almost any year you can recall.

"Heads or Tails," the handiwork of H. J. Langsfelder and Ervin Drake, came to the Cort

last night under the auspices of Your Theatre, Inc., a cooperative organization that promises to share any possible profits from the production with ticket purchasers. We hate to disillusion the ticket purchasers, but we're willing to bet a five-cent cigar there won't be any.

"Heads or Tails" has to do with a wealthy and blue-blooded diplomat who threatens to commit suicide because of love for a woman he planned to marry after divorcing his wife. A subplot, as if the above were not enough, has to do with the efforts of shyster insurance agents to protect his wife, after his mother-in-law had taken out a quarter of a million dollar policy on him.

Though "Heads or Tails" is billed as a comedy, it has elements of mystery. Why, for instance, did Your Theatre think it worth producing? And why did such capable players as Jed Prouty, Les Tremayne and Audra Lindley consent to waste their talents on such childish drivel.

1947

THEATRE CRITICS'

REVIEWS

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MAY 8, 1947

Kronenberger The Season Hits Bottom With a Thud

PM Reviews

There are some things too pain-

ful to dwell upon, and I mean to be as laconic about *Heads or Tails* as I can. *Heads or Tails* is the play in which you could become a stockholder simply by becoming a ticket-buyer. It is also, I am afraid, by all odds the worst play of the season. Dr. Johnson once remarked of some roast mutton: "It is as bad as bad can be. It is ill-fed, ill-killed, ill-kept and ill-dressed." To the same deplorable degree, *Heads or Tails* is ill-planned, ill-written, ill-acted and ill-staged.

—LOUIS KRONENBERGER

"Heads or Tails"—continued

New York Theatre Critics' Reviews Announces

1947 CRITICS' CIRCLE AWARD WINNERS

Best Play By An American Author

"All My Sons"

Best Play By A Foreign Author

"No Exit"

Best Musical Play

"Brigadoon"

"The Medium" and "The Telephone"

Journal-American

MAY 2, 1947

Are They Drama Or Are They Opera?

By ROBERT GARLAND

As journeyman reporter of the drama, I was chagrined to find myself, in overalls and against my better judgment, in the Barrymore Theatre. There, last night, with Arturo Toscanini beaming from the boxes, Gian-Carlo Menotti's "The Telephone" and "The Medium" were enjoying joint revivals. Especially the latter as piece de resistance of the program.

Sponsored originally by a "ballet society," listed originally as a "chamber opera," reviewed originally by the Journal-American's music man, "The Medium" has worked its way from Columbia University to the Heckscher Theatre, from the Heckscher Theatre to 47th Street, just off Broadway. But it is still up Miles Kastendieck's music-minded alley.

Knowing nothing much about music, not even knowing exactly what I like or exactly why I like it, I do know that "The Medium" is opera. Opera that is grand, not opera that is light or comic. As for "The Telephone," again used as a curtain-raiser, it is a nice, clean, not very original anecdote set to nice, clean, not very original music.

Downtown, as up, "The Telephone" is a "pert story" with the

orchestra making "amusing comments." Again, Marilyn Cotlow is "moderately successful" as The Girl. Frank Rogier takes over agreeably as The Boy. Back in February, Mr. Kastendieck called the whole thing "luff." Today, I call the whole thing "inconsequential." They are synonyms, I hope.

'Taut and Tingling'

Putting down "The Telephone," turning to "The Medium," this two-act tragedy is something else again. But definitely! Uptown, downtown, almost anywhere at all, Mr. Menotti's is a taut and tingling killer-diller. Writing his own book, his own lyrics and his own music, the author-lyricist-composer must have cooked them up with Charles Addams behind him, prompting.

Madame Flora, known as Baba to her daughter, Monica, and her ward, a mute known as Toby, is the miracle-monger of the title. Her followers are a Mr. and Mrs. Gobineau, and a Mrs. Nolan. For these, she conjures up her ghosties, poor phony spirits that mutter, moan and sing-song in some Never-Never-Land behind the

Great Beyond.

Monica and Toby attend to the out-of-this-world noises to which soaring chandeliers, bouncing dinner tables and prattling proto-plasmas are added so as to lend tautness and tingle to Gian-Carlo Menotti's words and music. But, after all, it is Madame Flora who literally scares herself to death, shooting her Tony for companionship.

At Columbia University, in the Heckscher Theatre and now at the Barrymore, "The Medium" has "dramatic power," is "excellent theatre," achieves "striking characterization" and is "modern American opera in its most promising form." Personally, I would prefer to hear it sung with no pause for intermission. But a drama reporter would not know.

Baba Gets the Works

Now, as before, Marie Powers is extraordinary as Madame Flora. In opera, over-acting is not too unbecoming. And Miss Powers, famed, as programs say, in concert, drama, radio, opera and oratorio, is no acting-singer to walk up to a singing actor's role and let the melodramatics pass by.

Baba calls for the works, and gets them!

Evelyn Keller is back as Monica. Her "unusually fine voice" is used even more "expertly" than it was. Her song about herself is not easily forgotten, and, from this journeyman reporter's point of view, her characterization is better rounded than those of the others. The other women, I mean. In either opera!

But it is the Mute of Leo Coleman who is the best single reason for going to the Barrymore while

'THE MEDIUM'

A tragedy in two acts; music, book and lyrics by Gian-Carlo Menotti; staged by the composer; settings and costumes by Horace Armistead; musical director, Emanuel Balaban; lighting by Jean Rosenthal; presented by Chandler Cowles and Efron Zimballist Jr. in association with Edith Lotzema, at the Barrymore Theatre Thursday evening, May 1, 1947. The cast:

Monica	Evelyn Keller
Toby, a mute	Leo Coleman
Madame Flora (Baba)	Marie Powers
Mrs. Gobineau	Beverly Dame
Mr. Gobineau	Frank Rogier
Mrs. Nolan	Virginia Reiser

'THE TELEPHONE'

The Ballet Society's production of "The Telephone," presented as a curtain raiser to "The Medium." The cast:

Lucy	Marilyn Cotlow
Bob	Frank Rogier

Scenops: The action takes place in Madame Flora's parlor, in our time. ACT I. Evening. ACT II. Evening, a few days later.

"The Telephone" and "The Medium" remain. A dancer out of Katherine Dunham's school, Mr. Coleman is a pantomimist such as you seldom see. Hollywood could do worse than keep his eyes on him. But, for Broadway's sake, I hope it does no such thing.

At the Barrymore, Harold Armistead's striking settings are once more on view. They go, have the macabre Charles Addams flavor. The librettist-lyricist-composer is also stage director. A forthright one at that. The orchestra, under Emanuel Balaban instead of the erstwhile Leon Barzin, sounds a trifle thin... Although "The Medium" is not drama, it is a good hair-raising show.

"The Medium" and "The Telephone"—continued

DAILY NEWS

MAY 2, 1947

Two Musical Playlets by Menotti Make an Exciting Stage Novelty

By JOHN CHAPMAN

Not often in any generation are a sense of theatre and a sense of music born in the same individual. Such a happily gifted person is, I believe, Gian-Carlo Menotti, whose two musical plays, "The Telephone" and "The Medium," were presented last evening at the Ethel Barrymore Theatre.

For this listener, the double bill provided one of the most stimulating performances of the playgoing year. It revealed the author-composer as a man of talent, wit and good taste; it offered some able singers, and it was accompanied by an interestingly constructed small orchestra of excellent musicians.

"The Telephone" is a little revue

sketch set to music. A young man wants to propose to his girl before taking a train on an out-of-town job, but every time he gets set to pop the question the phone rings and the girl begins a typically feminine gabfest. The poor guy finally makes his proposal—and is accepted—by calling her on the phone from the railroad station.

"The Medium" is a melodrama in two short acts, concerning a blowzy, sodden fortune-teller and

her two assistants—her daughter and a boy who is a mute. It is tersely and excitingly related, both musically and dramatically.

A One-Man Show.

Menotti, who is about 35, came here from Italy 19 years ago. Musically he is a product of Philadelphia's Curtis Institute. His radio opera, "The Old Maid and the Thief," has considerable renown, and the Metropolitan Opera staged his "Amelia Goes to the Ball."

In both "The Telephone" and "The Medium" Menotti shows himself a theatrical worker of admirable skill. His lyrics are simple and highly effective. His music is

resourceful, having both melodic and theatrical quality, and its instrumentation is modern. I think that, as an arranger, Mr. Menotti has listened carefully to the orchestrations of Prokofiev and some of the newer Russians—and there isn't any better listening these days.

Marilyn Cotlow and Frank Rogier are an engaging pair as the telephone lovers. In the title role of "The Medium" Marie Powers is a contralto of considerable dramatic power, and Evelyn Keller, as her daughter, is equally admirable. Leo Coleman does an extraordinary job of dance and pantomime as the mute, and Mr. Rogier, Virginia Beeler and Beverly Dame offer able assistance.

Menotti has directed the performances with a good feeling for show business, and Horace Armistead's settings seem just right. Emanuel Balaban conducts the orchestra and contributes much to the effectiveness of the evening. The sponsors—Chandler Cowles, Efrem Zimbalist Jr. and Edith Luytens, with an assist from the Ballet Society—are hereby most gratefully saluted for an interesting and artful contribution to the Broadway musical theatre.



MAY 4, 1947

Kronenberger

A Musician Who Has a Real Sense of Theater

Since every word of it is sung rather than spoken, the double bill at the Barrymore is a slightly unorthodox assignment for a play reviewer. I accept it gladly, however, for it is a much more interesting assignment than anything the straight Broadway theater has offered of late. Mr. Menotti is definitely some one to know, if not entirely easy to sum up; and *The Telephone* and *The Medium*—for which he composed the libretto and lyrics as well as the music—are something to see, if only as novelties and as proofs of an unusual and special talent.

What is special about this talent is that it is an amalgam. One may doubt Mr. Menotti's ability to write distinctive words or compose really distinguished music; what is be-

yond dispute is his ability to write words and music that fit like a glove and that notably reinforce each other. Beyond that, Mr. Menotti has a real sense of theater, in the Broadway rather than just the operatic sense; so that if he is a good deal less than a true playwright, he is a good deal more than a mere librettist.

His two plays are very unlike. *The Telephone* is quite properly billed as a curtain-raiser, and is the sort of spoofing trifle to be found in any revue. It tells of a man who is mad about a girl who is mad about telephoning. She doesn't allow him time enough between calls to propose, so in desperation he ducks out and phones her himself from a pay station. Mr. Menotti doesn't pace (or end) *The Tele-*

phone as fast as a revue would; it straggles on too long. On the other hand, Mr. Menotti gets his own kind of musical fun out of it, not only with comedy touches in the score, but simply by having it sung. For one of the least exalted, but most deadly, uses of the singing voice is its way of accentuating the absurdity in any situation.

The Medium is a solid two-act musical melodrama, a kind of horror story about a fake medium named Madame Flora. One night, in the midst of her shamming, she feels a cold hand upon her, and becomes terrified at the thought that there is something real in all this mumbo-jumbo. Her fright grows until, in a drunken panic, she mistakes one of her accomplices for a ghost, and murders him.

There is genuine melodramatic power in *The Medium*, bred of Mr. Menotti's ability to tell an exciting story, and to communicate — by words in combination with music—the minds and emotions of its characters. The music has very dramatic climaxes and some genuinely lyrical episodes, but what seemed to me peculiarly effective about it was what might be called a narrative quality, something that held the story together while keeping it steadily moving.

Both plays have been well produced. In *The Telephone*, Marilyn

Cotlow adds some nice comedy touches to a very good voice; and in *The Medium* Marie Powers wins the honors of the evening, both singing and acting the title role with great skill. And Evelyn Keller does a very good job as the medium's daughter, while Leo Coleman does some effective pantomiming.

If *The Medium* is not quite a first-rate chiller in the pure theater sense, it is because (as in *The Telephone*) Mr. Menotti is not compact or swift enough. And here, perhaps, we find the musician and the man of the theater slightly at odds, with the musician winning out. For it seems likelier that Mr. Menotti refused to forego certain musical temptations than that he fell down in his theatrical instincts. And to just that extent, his work is a bit of an anomaly on Broadway.

All the same, Broadway should welcome new blood, even if it seems a bit exotic; and be glad for new forms of entertainment, whether or not they have been properly christened. Mr. Menotti's present work is more intimate and better integrated than opera, and there's no reason why the theater shouldn't move over and make room for the kind of thing it represents. It's a fresh and interesting kind of thing, which need not be overrated. It is not art. But, then again, it is not arty.

—LOUIS KRONENBERGER

"The Medium" and "The Telephone"—continued

NEW YORK
Herald Tribune

MAY 2, 1947

By Otis L. Guernsey Jr.

Evviva Menotti!

GIAN-CARLO MENOTTI'S "The Medium" and "The Telephone," presented Thursday night at the Ethel Barrymore, combine words, music and story-telling with consummate artistry and great distinction. Regardless of the tag which one chooses to put upon them, whether "opera" or just plain "musical drama," these works, conceived, written, composed and staged by Menotti, have imagination, emotional force and showmanship. Their blend of music, words, characterization and action has the smoothness which is achieved only by a fine and versatile craftsman. These works are good theater in any Broadway terms.

The two-act "The Medium" is a gripping and sometimes almost terrifying ghost story reflecting the high passions and fears of

human nature in both words and music. Its libretto tells of a medium and her faked seances performed with the assistance of her daughter and a wild, mute gypsy lad. In the course of one of these performances she suddenly imagines a hand at her throat and frightens herself with the thought that perhaps, after all, she has real occult powers. From here on the movement and score rise toward melodrama in a key of mounting dread, ending on a strong emotional crescendo.

The undertones of this piece are human and pathetic rather than tragic, with its chicaning old beladame of a medium, its gullible elderly parents in search of messages from lost children, its ill-fated love affair between the mute and the medium's daughter. The characters are very real, however, and they modulate with the bars of the music all the way between engaging sentiment and clutching fear. Menotti's perfect triple rhyme of the lyrics, the music and the action never falters for an instant, as his staging makes a perfect fit with accents of his composition. The excellent sets and costumes by Horace Armistead add the last touch to a highly and uni-

formly polished work of art.

The one-act curtain raiser called "The Telephone" is a less imposing little comic piece, but it has been managed with no less finesse. Depicting a lady who is addicted to the use of the title instrument and a gentleman who can get his words of proposal in edgewise only by leaving the house and dialing her number, it sets forth a common foible with musical and verbal wit. The writing of comedy is often more difficult than the writing of drama; yet the sustained quality of smoothness in the Menotti creations is nowhere more apparent than here. Even in this lighthearted, satirical little piece, the interrelation of the words and music is positively unerring.

Sponsored on Broadway by Chandler Cowles and Efram Zimballist Jr. in association with Edith Luytens, this program was staged at the Heckscher Theater in February, on which occasion Virgil Thomson, music critic for the Herald Tribune, discussed it in his column. Calling upon a musical knowledge far more profound than this department's, he judged Menotti's score "thoroughly touch-

ing" and skillfully composed." Among the several performers singing the roles he cited Marie Powers as the medium, Evelyn Keller as the medium's daughter; and he also praised Leo Coleman's miming as the mute. Last night this department found it difficult to make preferences among a cast whose voices were almost uniformly clear, clean and flexible.

As noted above, "The Medium" and "The Telephone" are difficult to classify, though in the matter of dramatic artistry they are obviously out of the top drawer. True, they are dramas whose lines of dialogue are sung, and whose action occasionally pauses for lyric passages, but perhaps the term "opera" is too conventional a label to put upon them. Perhaps, at the risk of immediate contradiction, one might decide that they are their own form of musical theater, a sort of halfway mark between the number called "Soliloquy" in "Carousel" and grand opera as it exists today. At any rate, the abovementioned Mr. Thomson summed up his comments on "The Medium" and "The Telephone" with the words "Evviva Menotti!" This department echoes the expression heartily.

New York World-Telegram

MAY 2, 1947

Two Novel Operettas Score at Barrymore

By WILLIAM HAWKINS.

It is a courageous and laudable thing, this bringing to Broadway Menotti's "The Telephone" and "The Medium." They are short operas, and their music is modern. If this does not sound like an obviously commercial or popular proposition, let us enlarge on that description immediately. Both works are sung in English by a cast that scarcely lets you miss a word. The former has the charm and wit of a first-rate musical comedy number, but its music is fresher and richer. The latter has the eerie fascination of the most macabre thriller. In fact it is the only successful horror play of this year's theater.

Both these works were previously reviewed from a musical standpoint when they received their

brief original presentations. Now they are offered as operatic theater to the general public, and they answer the prevalent cries for novelty behind the footlights.

A Gay Romance.

"The Telephone" is a gay romance between a boy, a girl and her stationary talkie. Every time he tries to propose, she must phone, but he wins her heart in more ways than one by departing to ask for her hand from a booth.

This sounds a trifle, but the detail is apt and witty and the music has a sprightly gaiety. Humorous melodic ideas bring bursts of laughter from the audience. In a good-natured way there is something painfully familiar about the girl who can't keep her fingers off

the dial.

Marilyn Cotlow lends a sparkling voice and coquettish manner to the conversational heroine. She is most human, and particularly effective in the laughing aria.

Frank Rogier sings the mellow frustration of the would-be groom in rich tones.

The curtain raiser is played in a bright modern set in which the girl's settee is an enlarged French telephone.

"The Medium" is a longer tragedy that summons up a macabre atmosphere. Madame Flora, a phony seeress, uses her daughter and a mute as stooges for calling the beloved ghosts of her customers.

When the ghosts begin to appear real to her, she is not even allowed the solace of convincing her clients that she has fooled them. Her mind begins to totter as the voices and figures continue to return. She turns out the mute suspecting that he is deliberately frightening her.

Horror's Pile Up.

She wakes from a tortured drunken dream and is terrified at a movement of a curtain. She shoots, and a blood stain spreads down the curtain. Then out falls the body of the mute who has crept in while she slept to regain the affection of the daughter.

Marie Powers plays the seeress with forceful presence. She appears to have had stage training

in roles such as Wagner's Fricka and Kundry. Her broad style gives a commanding fearsomeness to the grotesque figure of the Medium.

Her voice can take on a dark threatening color or mount the dramatic passages with passion. The high point of her performance is the tortured scene where she remembers horrors she has seen, and her vision appears like melted Dall. Evelyn Keller, with a beautiful voice, does the most purely musical singing of the evening. She is tender as the foil of the seance and exotic in the strange song she sings to calm Flora's terrified delirium. She has an exquisitely youthful scene with the mute when she sings and enacts both parts of a proposal duet.

Leo Coleman, a Katherine Dunham pupil, lends both touching and weird qualities to the work with his fluid pantomime. There is a strange tender savagery about his waits with the daughter.

Here again Horace Armistead's scenery has apt atmosphere, with its murky and oppressive gloom. The set is both phony and threatening.

Well-known musical figures helped greet the two operas. Toscanini watched intently through opera glasses from a box.

Gladys Swarthout sat down front with her injured knee in a miniature hammock. And sultry Lobby Holman graced the orchestra center.

"The Medium" and "The Telephone"—continued

New York Post

MAY 2, 1947

Menotti Music Plays Are Disappointing

By RICHARD WATTS

Being convinced, probably with justification, that drama critics are soft touches for musical plays possessing operatic ambitions, a pair of youthful producers named Chandler Cowles and Efrem Zimbalist Jr. persuaded the local theatrical reviewers to sit in judgment on "The Medium" and "The Telephone," two works composed by Gian-Carlo Menotti, which opened at the Ethel Barrymore Theatre last night. Since the journalistic solons had gone into ecstatic rhapsodies over the vernacular opera as represented by

the colloquial "Street Scene," it was hoped that they would perform similar handspins in appreciation of the Menotti achievement.

Perhaps the optimistic young producers were correct in relying on the native kindliness of the play reviewers. Perhaps the seneschals of the drama are at the moment heralding the latest achievements in amalgamating the arts of theatre and opera in American lyric dramas of beauty and excitement. Conceivably Mr. Menotti is being hailed as just the man to bring about a successful liaison between song and story of the type sometimes envisioned by such dreamers as Richard Rodgers and Kurt Weill. I cannot help thinking, however, that, for all his ambitions and musical gifts, he has been pretty far from successful.

There are certainly good conceptions in both "The Telephone" and "The Medium." The former,

a comparatively brief curtain-raiser, has the amusing idea of reducing the horrors of Alexander Graham Bell's questionable invention to terms of satirical song and showing how its interminable ringing can interrupt courtship irretrievably. It is a rather engaging revue sketch done in light-operatic fashion, but it is neither witty enough nor inventive enough to be successful.

"The Medium" is the mainstay of the evening. Done in two acts, it is a musical Grand Guignol about a fraudulent fortune-teller who finds herself in the position of a doomed Frankenstein, pursued by the black magic which she had devised for her credulous clients. Aided by Horace's Armistead's effectively eerie setting, it does manage to capture a sinister and menacing atmosphere, and seems on the verge of achieving an excellent melodramatic climax, but its ending, instead of being properly chilling, is a most melancholy let-down.

The Dumb Servitor

At least one of Mr. Menotti's inventions in "The Medium" struck me as not only refreshing but filled with delightful possibilities. The chief male character is a servant of the fortune-teller, apparently loved by both that sinister lady herself and her unhappy daughter, and, instead of making him a romantic tenor, the composer has had the wonderful idea of presenting him as a tortured mute, who cannot sing or speak a word. Such characters, I am convinced, are just what the modern colloquial opera needs.

The actors in the two works are good enough in both singing and playing. Marie Powers, in particular, has quite a field-day as the medium. Incidentally, it was not merely my admiration for his role which made me think that Leo Coleman was particularly effective as the dumb servitor. Dramatically and musically, the Menotti double bill is nevertheless disappointing.

The New York Times

MAY 2, 1947

THE PLAY

By BROOKS ATKINSON

Having been certified by the music critics as first-quality opera last February, Gian-Carlo Menotti's "The Telephone" and "The Medium" turned up at the Ethel Barrymore last evening. On the word of their public relations counselor, they are to be judged in the theatre district as music drama. Since "Street Scene," "Brigadoon" and "Finian's Rainbow" have already pushed the dramatic stage in the direction of ballet and music, there is no reason why the enterprising composer of these two brief operas should not bring music over in our direction.

The distinctions between allied arts are less trivial than might be supposed. Although "The Telephone" is a rather tedious joke, too long for the comic idea it is projecting, "The Medium" is an engrossing exercise in necromancy with a dramatic score and brilliant singing, and the orchestration is much more eloquent than the uproar that rises from most pits in the theatre. In the chief role as the obsessed medium, Marie Powers is superb as both singer and actress. Horace Armistead has designed a macabre production that imaginatively interprets the theme. As technical supervisor, Jean Rosenthal has lighted the production with a stage sorcerer's distinction.

All these are elements that the dramatic stage appreciates, also. But between opera and the dramatic stage there is a difference in emphasis that keeps the two mediums fundamentally separate. In relating his tale of the bogus medium who succumbs to her own

charlatanism, Mr. Menotti has packed the drama into the music. He is not much interested in the libretto, which is undistinguished in literary style. As a story it is hardly more than a basic idea. All the development, as well as the characterizations, lie in the music. In "Street Scene" the music illustrates the drama. In "The Medium" the drama is the music.

As music it has, of course, the variety and flexibility of a primary art. Some of it is narrative, like the story of the seance; some of it is lyrical, like the daughter's love sequence with the mute Toby, and some of it is diabolically introspective, like the medium's ominous description of her obsession. But if it is true that the producers want "The Medium" judged as theatre fare, there is this very considerable distinction between opera and drama. In opera the music stands between the theatregoer and the actor, which makes for heavy and torpid expression of human emotion.

Mr. Menotti describes "The

Medium" as a tragedy in two acts. From the dramatic point of view, a tragedy acquires stature from the stature of the character. Since the medium is only a coarse and vulgar faker, and since her experience in the play is only a fancied sensation, "The Medium" as a tragedy is hardly more than a superficial narrative. Miss Powers' beautiful and forceful singing, the rapturous singing of Evelyn Keller as the daughter and the mute and limp acting of Leo Coleman as the helpless mute are admirable elements of the stage.

But the experience of bringing Mr. Menotti's modern operas downtown from the Heckacher to Broadway shows that music and drama are not interchangeable arts. Less distinguished music than Mr. Menotti's frequently strikes brighter sparks on Broadway. For Broadway's native music is the song as in "Foggy and Bess." In the current "Street Scene" Kurt Weill has gone about as far as a theatre musician can in extending the song in the direction of opera.

The Sun

MAY 2, 1947

'The Medium' and 'Telephone' Well Sung, but They're Skimpy Theatrically.

By WARD MOREHOUSE

This is a piece that is in the realm of the Music Department. Two operatic plays, "The Telephone" and "The Medium," which were put on last night at the Barrymore Theater, belong to Drama to the same extent that "The Old Homestead" might be an item for coverage by Music if it came into Carnegie Hall.

Anyway, the music-loving members of the drama Critics' Circle,

called forth by Chandler Cowles and Efrem Zimbalist Jr., were

there to a man as "The Telephone" and "The Medium," written by Gian-Carlo Menotti, turned up on the stage of one of our better playhouses. There is an element of novelty in these offerings, and they have a measure of theatrical effectiveness, but as stage fare I still prefer "Blue Jeans" and "The Wild Duck."

"The Telephone" (it's the Ballet Society's production) is a curtain-raiser, sung by two characters, and staged with curtains and a few props. It's a flimsy farcical playlet of a man who is trying to ask a girl to marry him and getting nowhere because of interruptions from her telephone. Finally, deciding to put the infernal device to his own use, he goes out to a coin box and proposes by

telephone.

"The Medium" is musical melodrama. It is done in two acts and is sung by six characters. It has a spooky, atmospheric setting, the parlor of Madame Flora, a fraudulent medium, who has been getting rich cheating her clients. But during a seance the Madame feels a cold hand at her throat and hears voices. From then on she is a frightened old girl, caught up in her own trickery, and her terror finally drives her to murder. Menotti's story is in the Grand Guignol tradition, but it's pretty flat at the finish. I'll still take "Any Night" or the "Black Mask," and without the music.

The evening's most dramatic performance is that of Marie Powers who sings, and sings

"The Medium" and "The Telephone"—continued

spectacularly, the role of the Madame, a raffish creature, who has a miserable time of it in her weird, low-lit abode. Leo Coleman brings forth shivers with his

slitherings as the mute Gypsy boy who is part of the Madame's staff in staging her seances. Marilyn Cotlow, who sings her acceptance over the wire in "The

Telephone," has an excellent voice. Jean Rosenhall has lighted the longer play skilfully. Horace Armistead's settings and costumes are first-rate.

You will not be bored in seeing and hearing "The Telephone" and "The Medium," but it's a double bill that is definitely short measure theatrically.

Daily Mirror

MAY 2, 1947

Brave Trio Brings Menotti to B'way

By ROBERT COLEMAN

Chandler Cowles, Efrem Zimbalist, Jr., and Edith Luytens merit a salute for their courage in bringing Gian-Carlo Menotti's chamber operas, "The Telephone" and "The Medium," to Broadway's Ethel Barrymore Theatre.

Though we do not think the Menotti works will prove commercial successes, they will serve to introduce a new art form to Rialto audiences. And they may be the pioneers that will prepare profitable fields for similar pieces in the future.

The Menotti chamber operas, or "lyric comedy and drama" as their composer calls them, lack the power and weight to flourish

on operatic stages and are too heavy and highbrow for wide appeal to operetta and musical comedy patrons.

"The Telephone" might be described as Cornelia Otis Skinner at the telephone with music. It is reminiscent of the one-woman monologues which Miss Skinner popularized, set to music. The plot is slight. A pretty Alexan-

der, Graham Bell addict gossips away in song with her friends, while a suitor sits nervously by trying to sing a proposal of marriage off his chest.

Finally, the poor fellow is forced to flee to—of all things—a telephone booth to reach the ears and heart of his beloved. Why the dumb cluck wanted to get hitched to such a gabby gal comes under the head of mystery. He should have read the account of the miserable mating of Socrates and the scold Zanthippe.

"The Telephone" is sung with persuasive skill and high spirits by Marilyn Cotlow, with an assist from Frank Rogier. If Rodgers and Hammerstein are looking for a tall, robust voiced fellow to romance with Mary Martin in their national company of "Annie Get Your Gun," Rogier could fill the bill.

"The Medium" is a musical Grand Guignol wienie about a fake spiritualist who develops hallucinations from her trade and the schnapps bottle. In attempt-

ing to vanquish an imaginary ghost, she kills her dumb assistant.

The title role is sung and acted to the hilt by Marie Powers. Leo Coleman's plastic pantomime as the mute is highly effective. Evelyn Keller does well by the spook sponsor's compassionate daughter, and appreciative nods are due Rogier, Beverly Dame and Virginia Beeler as seance dupes.

Menotti is one of the few present day musicians who writes music, lyrics and book. And he is one of the rare composers capable of arranging his own work. His versatility is somewhat amazing in this era of specialization.

"The Medium" and "The Telephone" received ovations from a distinguished first night audience. The celebs rattled the Barrymore's rafters with "bravos" and applause. Which made it almost impossible to hear the dissenting remarks of the cynics adept in calculating box office potentialities.

"A Young Man's Fancy"

The Sun

APRIL 30, 1947

'A Young Man's Fancy' a Raucous Comedy of Adolescents in Summer Camp.

By WARD MOREHOUSE.

Spring is here, all right. It was certainly in the Plymouth Theater last night and all over the stage as "A Young Man's Fancy," a pounding and clattering comedy, arrived in Forty-fifth street. The new play has an amusing scene or two, but it provides a tiresome evening among the adolescents.

Harry Thurschwell and Alfred Golden, playwrights new to my files, have written "A Young Man's Fancy," and Henry Adrian presents it at a \$3 top. The authors devote their three acts to an account of a teen-age worm who turns and thereby brings no end of ruction to a co-ed summer camp in Connecticut.

Little Dickie Crandall is a skinny, brainy, non-athletic Mama's boy when he arrives at Camp Freedom, but in the process of becoming a regular guy and squaring accounts with his tormentors, he causes bunks to collapse, puts frogs into the beds of his bunkhouse mates, daubs paint on their faces as they sleep

and does what he can to help along an adult romance. The chronicle of his revolt is told noisily, repetitiously and somewhat exhaustingly.

Ronnie Jacoby does well enough as the poor little rich boy, who is transformed into a hellion. Leonore Lonergan, now an attractive, grown-up, gives a routine performance in a completely lifeless role. Bill Talman, playing the co-operator of the summer camp, is as easy as the dialogue and situations will permit. Margaret Langley is pleasing as a camp instructor who goes in for romance, and there are braying, teen-age performances from Richard Leone, Donald Hastings, Roy Sterling and Bart Roe. Joan Shepard plays the most objectionable brat who has been seen hereabouts in quite a few Aprils.

Ralph Alswang has done the setting, which has the summer camp look, and Robert E. Perry's direction keeps everybody pretty steadily in motion, which is possibly what the authors had in mind.

'A YOUNG MAN'S FANCY.'

A comedy by Harry Thurschwell and Alfred Golden; staged by Robert E. Perry; scenery and lighting by Ralph Alswang; costumes by Lou Kneale; presented by Henry Adrian at the Plymouth Theater Tuesday evening, April 29, 1947. The cast:

Harold Greenley	Bill Talman
Evita Wilson	Margaret Langley
Dr. Roe	Bart Roe
Dorothy Bennett	Joan Lawrence
Doris	Richard Leone
Grilly	Donald Hastings
Joker Stephen	Roy Sterling
Ruddy	Joan Shepard
Helen Greenley	Leonore Lonergan
Dickie Crandall	Ronnie Jacoby
Oliver Crandall	Raymond Bramley
Mrs. Mary Crandall	Lee Carter
Faith	Joan Shepard
Miss Weatherhead	Myrtle Ferguson
Camp Triller Boy	Mickey Carroll

SYNOPSIS: The action takes place in a boy's bunkhouse at Camp Freedom, in Connecticut. ACT I. Scene 1. A summer afternoon. Scene 2. Later that evening. ACT II. Scene 1. Afternoon. A week later. Scene 2. Evening. A week later. ACT III. Scene 1. The following day. Scene 2. Later that morning.

"A Young Man's Fancy" is spring fare. It is also a grating and raucous comedy, such an adolescent uproar one playwright remarked at the close of the exercises that he would like to go around the corner and see something starring Mrs. Whiffen. I shared his sentiments.

"A Young Man's Fancy"—continued

NEW YORK
Herald Tribune

APRIL 30, 1947

By HOWARD BARNES

Why Spring Is Far Behind

ANTICS in a summer camp are celebrated in more lackadaisical than laughable fashion in "A Young Man's Fancy" at the Plymouth. Harry Thurschwell and Alfred Golden have had the good notion of making a bunch of tykes, living in a bunkhouse at Camp Freedom, somewhere in Connecticut, mirror a larger pattern of

people living together, but they have stubbed their dramatic enterprise badly. Since the players walk and talk through scene after scene with almost no indication that they have had the benefit of direction, this new Henry Adrian offering is as dull as it is disappointing.

The authors have not failed to establish a comic point of departure. The idea of small fry, involved in the first growing pains of adolescence, is sound enough. It occasionally makes for amusing moments at the Plymouth, as a little non-conformist turns the tables on his room-mates and involves his counsellor in fantastic romantic complications. Unfortunately,

there is too little wit in the writing, too little imagination in the plotting, and too little taste in the jokes, to make "A Young Man's Fancy" more than a tedious entertainment.

A large company is engaged in the show, consisting mainly of youngsters. The kids try hard at every turn of the script, but it takes more than the practical jests which they are forever playing on each other to sustain genuine comic excitement. Ronnie Jacoby is splendidly self-assured as the brat who gets to be a big boy the hard way. Richard Leone, Donald Hastings and Bart Roe are other pint-size players who fill in the

tapestry of the action, while Joan Shepard has several effective moments as the pig-tailed friend of the little hero.

In adult roles there are Bill Talman, Lenore Lonergan, Hugh Reilly and Margaret Langley, who is taking over the part of Lynne Carter due to the latter's illness. They make the most of the play's possibilities. It is not their fault that they are frequently left twiddling their thumbs in and around a nice setting by Ralph Alswang. There is the gist of quite a provocative comedy in "A Young Man's Fancy". It is rarely projected in terms of meaning or safety.



MAY 1, 1947

Kronenberger

A Dreary Little Comedy Of Small Fry at Camp

PM Reviews

This is the date when you start eating oysters—and seeing new plays—entirely at your own risk. The man who first cracked wise about oil and water must have clean forgot about show business and late

spring; but the rest of us are given a handy new reminder of it by A Young Man's Fancy.

A Young Man's Fancy is not quite the worst in spring exhibits—it actually contains some scattered

moments of fun. But they are very scattered, and the play as a whole is pretty terrible. The Messrs. Thurschwell and Golden have written of life in a camp for growing boys and girls, and more particularly of the toughening of a little sissy who shares a bunk with four normal hoodlums. When these kids are raising hell in a small way, or resorting to the classic pranks of camp life, they can be moderately authentic and briefly amusing.

Even here, however—where they're at their best—the kids grow dull by doing everything half a dozen times. And when, for plot, our little hero decides to play Mr. Fixit in a cooling romance between two counsellors, the play is done for. The romance, God knows, is tiresome enough in itself. But the boy swipes a textbook on sex, and

we have to sit through one more of those comedies in which kids prattle away suggestively about things they don't understand. That was never a very funny device; it is now as moth-eaten as it is cheap.

What acting honors there are go to the five bunk-mates—to Ronnie Jacoby as the reformed sissy, and to Richard Leone, Donald Hastings, Roy Sterling and Bart Roe as the four Katzenjammers. When the script permits them to act like real youngsters, they do so. Lenore Lonergan, Bill Talman and a number of other grown-ups in the cast have little chance to distinguish themselves. Possibly the most cheerful thing in the play is Ralph Alswang's set, which promises more gaiety than the script can produce.

—LOUIS KRONENBERGER

Daily Mirror

APRIL 30, 1947

'Young Man's Fancy' Starts Out Well

By ROBERT COLEMAN

In "A Young Man's Fancy" Harry Thurschwell and Alfred Golden started out to pen a comedy about the transformation of a poor little rich boy sissy into a self-reliant, popular youngster.

The reformation takes place in a kid's camp in Connecticut and is hilarious until sex rears its dull head, threatening to ruin the reputation of the vacation spot and wrecking what could have been a sprightly beguiling play.

The lad's dad wanted him to learn woodcraft, swimming and baseball, but, instead, he concern-

trated too much on a medical book, "borrowed" from the doctor's office, in an effort to help along the romance of a pair of counsellors who had been kind to him.

The first act proved human and amusing. The problem posed was real and authors were on the right track in their working out of a solution. Then up

popped that physiological tome and a lot of leery wisecracks that were particularly unfunny coming from the mouths of babes.

We cannot recall a play or a similar theme since Arthur Koerber's "Having Wonderful Time." And the time seems propitious for another, which makes it regrettable that the authors have not been content to let their humor spring from the development of character rather than forced laugh lines.

Producer Henry Adrian has given the comedy a good production. The set by Ralph Alswang and the costumes by Lou Eisele are realistic, atmospheric and, for some, nostalgic.

Bill Talman and Lenore Lonergan are excellent as the brother and sister who seek their fortune in juvenile guidance. Miss Lonergan, who used to specialize in brats herself, has grown into an effective adult actress. Talman, who was discharged from

the Army with the rank of Major is currently reduced to an ex-Corporal.

Camp Freedom's more precocious and mischievous customers are credibly impersonated by Ronnie Jacoby, Richard Leone, Donald Hastings, Roy Sterling, Bart Roe and Joan Shepard.

And there are helpful performances in other roles by Margaret Langley, bubbling for the indisposed Lynn Carter; Raymond Bramley, Hugh Reilly, Joan Lawrence, Myrtle Ferguson and Lee Carney.

Robert E. Perry has directed the script to eliminate lulls and bolster its plausibility.

The first nighters roared at Freedom's lakeside mishaps and misdemeanors. And they were generous with applause. But we could only share their enthusiasm about half the time, which, to lift a golf term, is under par for the Plymouth Theatre comedy course. A good beginning led but to a scrambled, inflectional ending.

"A Young Man's Fancy"—continued

The New York Times

APRIL 30, 1947

THE PLAY

By BROOKS ATKINSON

In case you wish to observe a parcel of adolescent boys behaving normally, your attention is directed to "A Young Man's Fancy," which was put on at the Plymouth last evening. To judge by the bedium on the stage, Harry Thurschwell and Alfred Golden, the authors, knew how terrifying life can be in a summer camp when the boys are in good health and voice.

As a matter of strict fact, the authors have written one of those synthetic comedies that pop up in

the theatre at this time of year when no one is really vigilant. The play is strung together out of random incidents and arrives at a conventional conclusion by throwing everything together in a hurry in the last scene.

The cheerful commonplaceness of the playwriting is rather a pity. For "A Young Man's Fancy" has a kind of junior "Hellzapoppin" exuberance now and then, and the cast of normal juvenile delinquents is attractive. They are Roy Sterling, Donald Hastings, Richard Leone, Bert Roe, Ronnie Jacoby and Joan Shepard—as screaming and impudent a bunch of youngsters as ever tore a theatre to pieces; and they are all surprisingly good actors.

To anyone whose mind has been distorted by trying to make something coherent out of boys in a summer camp, the acting of these

embryo thugs and Robert E. Perry's high-pitched direction have a frightful authenticity. The boys screaming at the top of their voices, which is the theme song of a summer camp. They bruise and thump each other like wild animals, which is authentic, too.

Having a talent for looking on the bright side of things, the authors offer this youthful mayhem as comedy. Some of it is robustly funny, like the practical joke of making the beds collapse in series, and setting slatstick booby-traps throughout the dormitory. But this is the only genuine hilarity "A Young Man's Fancy" has to offer. For the story of love between the camp counsellors is about as thin as a musical comedy plot. And the little devils are not so bright when they start writing alarming letters based on phrases stolen out of the medico's book on nervous disorders. Like the excitable boys of

Camp Freedom, the authors of "A Young Man's Fancy" have difficulty in concentrating on anything for longer than five seconds.

To house the animals, Ralph Alsawang has designed an attractive bunk-shack with a sunny outdoor atmosphere. Lou Elsie, supervisor of the costumes, has given the boys' counsellor quite a sharp wardrobe, reeking of Esquire; and there is at least one bathing suit for a girls' counsellor that revives a city-dweller's devotion to nature.

Bill Talman plays the boys' counsellor pleasantly. Lenore Lonergan plays the manager of the camp very well, also, at the same time reminding all of us how much better she could act a part of genuine quality. There is nothing much but surface scribbling in any of the parts. "A Young Man's Fancy" is an authentic sketch of life in a summer camp—no doubt about that. But is it a comedy?

New York Post

APRIL 30, 1947

Fun at Summer Camp In Juvenile Comedy

By RICHARD WATTS JR.

We hardy first-nighters spent many long months at a summer camp for boys and girls last evening, watching eager, bright-eyed Young America make a man out of a rich sissy by teaching him the joys of baseball and practical jokes. It was quite an edifying and patriotic sight as the weak, neurotic little fellow learned his lesson from his up-standing camp-mates and proved that he had reformed by giving up wasting his time reading books. My impression was that the episode of the renunciation of

literature showed the authors of the new play in an autobiographical mood.

The play, incidentally, is called "A Young Man's Fancy," and is the work of two gentlemen named Harry Thurschwell and Alfred Golden. They are obviously such well-meaning dramatists that it seems even more ungracious than usual to say of them that they have written one speech which contains the most pessimistic statement of the year. It comes when one of their characters, eyeing the obnoxious inmates of the camp with loving approval, remarks that they are just typical American boys.

It must not be thought that "A Young Man's Fancy" is concerned only with the high moral lesson of conformity through athletics and hazing. It is also occupied, in clean but merry fashion, with the stirring of the youthful sex instinct. When the reformed weak-

ling, whose salvation is indicated when he gives up Shakespeare for the baseball guide, gets hold of the camp doctor's book on nervous ailments and discovers some things about love and babies, you have a scene which at least the authors appear to cherish.

There is probably a valuable lesson in the relation between mechanical progress and the drama to be found in "A Young Man's Fancy," but it is a rather depressing one. At least it occurs to me that if the collapsible camp cot had never been invented, this particular play could not have been written. Certainly it could never have been staged. Every time the two playwrights or the director

can't think of anything else to do, which is frequent, they have an actor sit or lie on a cot, which immediately collapses. It is but fair to say that the most comic moments of the evening are thereupon supplied.

Stage Children

Although it is my private suspicion that the boys and girls of the narrative are the most unappetizing set of stage children since Hollywood wrecked Sidney Kingley's "Dead End" kids, there were clearly playboys last night who thought they were fine. Most actively occupied among the grown-up actors are Bill Talman, Lenore Lonergan and Margaret Langley, who do all they can. Miss Langley, substituting for Lynne Carter, added a particularly needed note of liveliness. "A Young Man's Fancy" is harmless, but dull. And it is certainly juvenile.

In the end, the playwrights are remarkably magnanimous. With all their disapproval of books for boys, they bring about their happy ending by having their young hero find practical value in his perusal of the baseball guide. I thought it was generous of them.

DAILY NEWS

APRIL 30, 1947

'A Young Man's Fancy' a Witless Play About Life in a Kiddie Kamp

By JOHN CHAPMAN

The Police Athletic League, a fine organization devoted to the happiness of New York children, might do something about Henry Adrian, Harry Thurschwell and Alfred Golden.

It could accuse them—and if it doesn't I will—of contributing to the delinquency of minors by producing and writing a play called

"A Young Man's Fancy," which spread its feeble horrors upon the stage of the Plymouth Theatre

last evening.

The delinquency mentioned has nothing to do with decency or indecency, morality or immorality. It concerns, merely, the presence of several teen-age boys and a girl or two, all of them eager and perhaps talented, in a punk play. It is too bad that a youngster begin-

ning a stage career has to work in a witless comedy.

"A Young Man's Fancy" occurs in a boys' bunkhouse in a residential children's camp in Connecticut. It involves a mama's boy and the making of a man out of him. It encompasses some lousy and obvious jokes and one good one that was cribbed from The New Yorker.

It is the custom in the better class of newspapers not to name names in stories about possibly errant minors, on the ground that they may be innocent victims of their elders. I shall not, therefore, single out for mention any of the boys and girls involved in "A Young Man's Fancy." But I would like to say that every one of them is in there pitching.

There are some grown-ups in the cast, too, and they aren't as good as the kids.

"A Young Man's Fancy"—continued



APRIL 30, 1947

Sophisticated Juveniles Frolic

By WILLIAM HAWKINS.

As a parent-saving device a youngsters' camp looks like a summer-long sigh of domestic relief in "A Young Man's Fancy." This gang of 16-to-12-year-olds rages, clown and conceives of diabolical torments for each other.

Thanks to a sprightly and inhumanly natural crew of young actors, the evening is frequently very funny. They are typical wretches who go through their paces with terrifying vigor and carelessness.

The play itself, if you stop to think about it, is something else again. It is based on that over-worked gag of kids promoting a love affair by anonymous letters. The script uses every cliché of joke and plot that it is possible to drag in. And when it infre-

quently lets the elders take over, it can be unbearable.

Precocious Discoveries.

A bookish sissy is unwillingly thrust into a bunk with four veterans of Camp Freedom. A girl counsellor puts him on to a Frankensteinish method of hating them in return for the treatment they award him.

This young Dickie is highly successful. He then devises a way of promoting the counsellor's romance with the camp's owner by sending her letters copied from a borrowed medical book.

His precocious discoveries, relayed home by a couple of the children, almost ruin the camp.

To the play's credit, this youthful probing into physiology gives

the baby comedians some of their best moments without embarrassing the onlookers.

Seething Sophistication.

Last night's audience responded to the proceedings as if it consisted entirely of parents of the cast. It probably just consisted of a preponderance of parents in general. It is safe to say that such activities and conversation as went on on the stage are a lot funnier away from home.

When the directors of the camp try their modern child psychology on their adopted imps they are up against some faster dodgers than Russian delegates to a peace conference.

Within their realm, the 16-to-12s deliver with such scathing

sophistication and clear sense as to make the grownups sound like muddled and idiotic hypocrites.

As the studious little worm, Ronnie Jacoby is appealing, and Joan Shepard makes his contemporary accomplice as horrendous a blonde of 10 as anyone could hope not to cross.

Understudy Steps In.

The quartet of defeated terrors gives the play its flesh. Bart Roe is the chubby blasper, Roy Sterling the impious mimic, Donald Hastings an assertive searcher for snail shells and Richard Leone a lanky iconoclast.

Of the camp staff, Bill Talman comes off best as the GI co-owner of the place, who probably changes his mind about the peacefulness of the Army after trying Camp Freedom. Lenore Lonergan is earnest as his unsympathetic sister whose loyalty to modern theory about children is inclined to leave her high and dry.

Margaret Langley stepped in as understudy for the indisposed Lynne Carter and made a pretty romantic interest. Hugh Belfry is a pleasant camp doctor. But the parents and guardians involved are caricature plot links, and none of them competes with the tumbling younger generation.

Journal American

APRIL 30, 1947

'A Young Man's Fancy' Opens at Plymouth

By ROBERT GARLAND

It is Bernard Shaw who openly espines that youth is too good for young people. And the young people who turned up last night at the Plymouth are certainly the young people the iconoclastic Irishman has in mind.

Reading from left to right, from bad to worse, or even upside down, no more unsavory group of little men and little women could anywhere be found. If these are the adults of tomorrow, bring on that atom bomb!

Harry Thurstwell and Alfred Golden get together and wrote "A Young Man's Fancy," the comedy of bad manners in which the unsavory boys and girls appear. And, after an unsuccessful tryout on the road, Henry Adrian has brought it in with direction by Robert Ferry, scenery by Ralph Alwang, costumes by Lou Eisele, beds by Millay Iron Works, bedding by

Joseph Hansen and towels by Cannon Mills, Incorporated.

Which should give you some idea. But not enough. For Mr. Adrian's successor to "The Girl From Nantucket" has to do with a Summer camp in the Nutmeg State, which is actually Connecticut. Under the counselorship of Harold Greenley, his sister and his girl-friend, Duvie, Grilly, Jokey and Buddy carry on like crazy, while Faith, forswearing Hope and Charity, brings word of bees, flowers, parenthood, and other whispered items.

Left Mirthless

To me, clear eyed, industrious, anxious to be pleased, it is humorless, grim and definitely distasteful. In the mouths of young people, unsavory though they be, constipation, sexual relations, prenatal influence, childbirth, or even

athlete's foot, is no just cause for laughter. Nor are falling beds, knotted clothing and clownish makeups uproariously amusing. And references to the cimetery lectularius leave me mirthless as a mule.

Yet, when the young people on whom youth is wasted, rest from their labors, the love of two counselors—Harold Greenley and his take-her-or-leave-her Sylvia—is scarcely more diverting. Nor is the mortgage hanging over Camp Freedom. And the incredible Mr. and Mrs. Crandell who pop in and out of the bunkhouse, threatening to take their beloved Dickie Boy away. Or to put him back again, which is kind of tough on Dickie.

As the tale, if it is a tale, unfolds, young Dickie Crandell turns out to be the only camper at Camp Freedom who is worth preserving. And, egged on by the authors and their actors, the ill-mannered little men and women do what they can to drag him down to their unsavory level. Dickie alips, but only in an effort to get even. As the final curtain falls, his newfound love for baseball and other health- and-strength activities, is cooling.

Tiresome Fun

Apart from the Dickie Crandell of Ronnie Jacoby—he of "Junior Miss," "Tomorrow the World" and

"Guest in the House"—the acting is on the forgive-and-forget-it side. But Master Jacoby pretends to be the sissy of Camp Freedom with more charm and manliness than the character, as written, calls for. He speaks his lines and makes his motions with a skill and understanding worthy of worthier material. Or maybe the other characters are merely less unsavory than he.

Taken as they come, which is the only way to take them, the grown-ups at the Plymouth set no good example to the youngsters. Bill Talman is unconvincing as Harold Greenley, the big mind- and-muscle man around Camp Freedom. He, to look at and listen to, cares no more about his kiddie campers than would Bernard Shaw. And he seems to care but little more about the Sylvia who is his girl friend. His Harold is happiest with his sister.

That sister is entrusted to Lenore Lonergan. A big girl now, a buxom graduate of "Junior Miss," "Dear Ruth" and "The Philadelphia Story," she and Helen do not get along together. And Margaret Langley, as Sylvia, remains outside the fictional proceedings. The others are confused rather than convincing, along with Mr. Ferry's direction... At the Plymouth, "A Young Man's Fancy" heavily turns to thoughts of good keen fun. And tiresomely, as far as I'm concerned!

"Miracle in the Mountains"



APRIL 26, 1947

Molnar Play Opens at the Playhouse

By WILLIAM HAWKINS.

"Miracle in the Mountains" by Molnar which opened last night at the Playhouse, is billed as a legend. It is slight and gentle with no more substance than a breeze, and to mean anything would have to be acted with utmost sincerity and delicacy.

In its present production the play is gifted with some miracu-

lously awkward acting. No one in it appears to believe anything he says. As a result the play has no character, and has no virtue beyond its brevity.

It has all the falseness of the worst written novels of the last century, and seems dated and boring.

This is another of those plays that deals with an imaginary return of Christ, or one of His angels, to prevent a horrible injustice. A servant girl of no particular morals is accused of killing her bastard child.

Hated by Townspeople.

The townspeople have always hated her and she stays on in this Carpathian mountain village for love of a weakling schoolmaster. As it turns out the Mayor, who is her child's father, had killed the boy in a rage and buried his body.

The attorney, who knows everything without being told, reveals the child, resurrects it and takes it away with him. It is apparent that they are going to heaven, but if not, any destination would have been an improvement for the little boy. Everybody in the town beat him, and his mother was as guilty as the rest.

Julie Hayden attempts to play the servant girl with sincerity, but though she suggests a certain fervor about the girl it comes out a jerky performance.

Benign Smile Sustained.

Victor Killian sustains a benign smile throughout the plays as the attorney, and Frederic Tossara borders on a caricature of Orson Welles as Mr. Rochester in the role of the Mayor.

E. A. Krumschmidt comes off better than the rest as a defending lawyer, who learns from the case that his reason must be controlled by his heart. Manart Kippen looks distinguished as the Judge but lacks any security.

This play might have a mystic tenderness and a glow of faith if it were properly done. As it stands, it is not quite the sort of miracle it intended to be.



"MIRACLE IN THE MOUNTAINS"

Play by Ferenc Molnar; settings and costumes by Robert Davison; staged by Molnar; presented by Archer King and Harrison Woodhull at the Playhouse, Friday evening, April 25, 1947. The cast:

Clement	Kermit Kagley
Domine	Norman Wallace
Ambrus	Salon Ludwig
The Prior	John McKee
The Attorney	Victor Killian
Clay	Julie Hayden
Simon	E. A. Krumschmidt
Sergeant	John Frederick
Gendarme	Mace Gwarr
Veronica	Constance O'Connor
Corusia	Gloria O'Connor
The Judge	Lawrence Tibbett Jr.
The Mayor's Wife	Manart Kippen
The Doctor	Katherine Anderson
The Mayor	Bernard Randall
The Baron	Frederic Tossara
Julius	Les Patrick
Young Woman	Carl Wallace
Court Attendant	Vivian King
Old Woman	Marjorie Dalton
The Prosecutor	Darlene Lomola
The Schoolmaster	Fitt Herbert
Members of the Elders' Council:	Jack Haller, Harry Miller, Jack O'Brien, Charles Russell, C. E. Smith and Augustus Vaccaro.
Little Boy	Maurice Cavell
Townspeople:	Elaine Filippin, Balthus Winters and Jane DuFrayne.

SYNOPSIS—Scene: In a small town, somewhere in the dark Carpathian Mountains, about a hundred years ago. Act I—Scene 1. A monastery. Scene 2. The mayor's house. Act II—Scene 1. "Judgment Hall." Scene 2. At the foot of the hill.

New York Post

APRIL 26, 1947

Molnar Legend of Mountains Proves Disappointing Play

By Richard Watts Jr.

Of all the playwrights of modern pre-Hitler Central Europe, Ferenc Molnar is the most legendary and the one to whom American playgoers stand in deepest debt. A shrewd, urbane, wise, civilized and ironic observer of the follies of mankind, he is the master dramatist of the romantically cynical and the cynically romantic, combining a skeptical eye and a sentimental heart in the most engaging fashion imaginable. There was sad evidence at the Playhouse last night, however, that mysticism and the crusading advocacy of faith over intellect are not among his gifts.

From "Lillom" to "The Glass Slipper" and from "The Guardsman" to "The Play's the Thing," the eminent Hungarian has given us delightful works that could be sad, gay, bittersweet, scornful, sympathetic, poetic, realistic, tender or sardonic at will, and make us believe in the desired mood and cherish it. But in the current "Miracle in the Mountains" he

has dropped the mantle of the wry romantic to assume the garb of the man of simple piety, and it is simply impossible to take the masquerade seriously.

Perhaps it is true that in a day when the need for calling upon all the latent powers of man's intelligence seems at the greatest, it is not easy for a presumably sophisticated playgoer to feel comfortable in the presence of a drama that pleads for the surrender of the intellect to the powers of mystic belief. Perhaps our stony-heartedness last night at Molnar's message of simple faith was the most complete vindication of the importance of that message. The fact remains that some of us who could at least

accept the temporary dramatic validity of such a plea in Chesterton's "Magic" were unable to do so in Molnar's "Miracle of the Mountains."

The Supernatural

In both "Lillom" and "The Devil" Molnar was able to employ a touch of the supernatural playfully, imaginatively, charmingly. He may not have been in earnest, but he was beautifully plausible and persuasive. Here he is in deadly earnest, and we refuse to believe in him for a moment. That seems to be the answer. His sportive romantic talent, which can be so delightful, is both happiest and most sincere when it is being frankly

playful, but when it strives earnestly to surrender its ironical urbanity in the interest of an ardent simplicity, the reformation stubbornly refuses to ring true.

There have been poor Molnar plays in the past, as such a minor effort as his "Delicate Story" proved, but none without some sign of the playwright's brilliant gifts. There are such signs in "Miracle in the Mountains," but they are few and scattering. In telling the story of a hapless serving girl in the Carpathian Mountains, who is falsely accused of killing her illegitimate child and is saved after a fashion by a mystic stranger who seems to have something to do with the

diety, he has achieved moments of pathos and suspense, but for most of the time his play is thin, groping and sadly ineffectual.

Pleasant Legend

It is the dramatist's purpose to achieve the simple quality of a peasant legend, to provide a sort of modest appeal to faith and to chide one of its sympathetic characters gently for his refusal to put his trust in divine guidance. The trouble is that he falls on all three scores. The simplicity becomes dramatic dullness, the pious appeal seems fraudulent despite its undoubted sincerity, and the sympathetic character's skepticism is shared by the playgoer.

Although Robert Davison's sets and costumes are effective, the author's direction is rather shaky and the acting does not show several talented players at their best. Julie Hayden, for example, looks sadly lovely and plays with her customary straightforward simplicity the role of the persecuted girl; Victor Killian, a splendid actor with a fine rugged honesty about him, is commendably forthright as the mystic stranger, and E. A. Krumschmidt is sympathetic as the amiable skeptic, but they do not quite succeed in bringing their parts to life. But, then, neither did the author.

"Miracle in the Mountains"—continued

NEW YORK
Herald Tribune

APRIL 26, 1947

— By HOWARD BARNES —

Preposterous Parables

FERENC MOLNAR, an old hand at theatrical illusion, has traded sound dramaturgy for quaint parables in "Miracle in the Mountains." His "legend," as he likes to call his new work at the Playhouse, is a rococo contemplation of human and divine justice, taxing both the efforts of a large company and the patience of spectators. However sincere and fervent in its intentions, this account of "The Attorney," performing a

minor resurrection in "the dark Carpathian Mountains, about a hundred years ago" is a lamentable stage exhibit. To the great credit of Victor Kilian, he keeps the major role in some sort of restrained focus. The other players take a considerable shellacking.

"Miracle in the Mountains" is as muddled in execution as it is in conception. Since Molnar himself is responsible for the direction, he must accept full credit for a preposterous production. His idea of having an omniscient stranger circumvent a miscarriage of justice has only a few moments of valid authority. Characters drop out of the proceedings as though they were never meant to be there in the first place. The action shifts wildly from a monastery to a Victorian drawing room, lingers in a

medieval judgment hall and winds up at the foot of the "Hill," where a youngster is raised from his grave. The dialogue scarcely sustains religious inspiration. The acting, as a whole, is downright ridiculous.

In brief synopsis, "Miracle in the Mountains" treats of a vagrant serving wench, who bears an illegitimate son to the mayor of a town in the "dark Carpathians" and is unjustly accused of killing the boy in order to marry the schoolmaster. As may already have been gathered, she finds herself an excellent defense counsel, who exacts contrition from the real murderer and mercy for her. Whether through over-zealousness or carelessness, Molnar has failed to knit his legend into a moving theatrical unity. What he has to

say in his newest drama comes stutteringly across the footlights.

Kilian is the only member of the cast who makes much sense out of bad writing and clumsy staging. In a baggy suit, suggesting the post-Civil War period, he gives "The Attorney" a dignity and purpose which the part deserved. Julie Haydon, as the persecuted girl, has passages in which she conjures up a quiet, spiritual courage, but they are few and far between. Frederic Tozere is the victim of some of Molnar's worst direction in the part of the mayor and E. A. Krumschmidt and Manart Kippen, in the other principal roles, are generally confounded by the doings. "Miracle in the Mountains" has much to do with the spirit, but it has very little of its own on the stage.

The New York Times

APRIL 26, 1947

THE PLAY

By BROOKS ATKINSON

Nothing is so miraculous about "Miracle in the Mountains" as the fact that Ferenc Molnar wrote it and staged it. For in the past Mr. Molnar has written imaginative drama with the caution of a café scribbler—avoiding at all costs the mawkish and the maudlin. But there is no use pretending that his "Miracle in the Mountains," put on at the Playhouse last evening, is not mawkish and maudlin in the writing and loose and lethargic in

the staging. It is hard to believe that the author of "Liliom," "The Glass Slipper" and "The Play's the Thing" has written this commonplace legend.

Possibly he should be given full marks for attempting a sublime theme. In "Miracle in the Mountains" an attorney who believes in God confounds earthly justice, saves a poor servant girl who has been falsely accused of murder and brings back to life the broken body of the lad who has been killed. "Miracle in the Mountains" is probably no whim of a worldly dramatist but an affirmation of his faith.

To arouse faith in the theatre a miracle must rise out of some mood in the writing, like passion or enchantment, and some quality in the performance, like ecstasy or spiritual beauty. But "Miracle in the Mountains" is lackluster in literary style and perfunctory in

the staging. You would never suspect that a master of the theatre had been near it.

Although Mr. Molnar has assembled some good actors, he rarely gets a good performance out of them. Take Victor Kilian, for example. He is an excellent actor who can project sincerity, radiate warmth and win the audience to any part he plays. Here he is cast as the visiting angel who confounds earthly justice, and as usual his voice is kindly and forthright and his manner is homely and ingratiating. But he is made up to look like the spitted image of Senator Connolly, which is confusing; and the play leaves him silent and inanimate through long scenes with a smug smile on his lips.

As the wretched servant girl, Julie Haydon is hardly persuasive with her dryad style of nods and

becks. Frederic Tozere has a good scene or two of nervous anxiety as the guilty Mayor; and E. A. Krumschmidt acts a provincial lawyer with more originality than Molnar put into the part. Manart Kippen acts the judge with considerable perception also. As the Mayor's wife, Katherine Anderson has the grace to be gratifyingly handsome.

But Mr. Molnar's sketch of high society in a small town is hackneyed and egotistical, and the acting of that scene is practically unbearable. As the scene designer Robert Davidson has choked the small stage of the Playhouse with some massive and scenic settings; the last one in the mountains is worth a summer's vacation bus tour. But "Miracle in the Mountains" represents the master of the continental drama writing and directing like a worthy amateur.

The Sun

APRIL 26, 1947

'Miracle in the Mountains,' Molnar Legend, Is Very Cluttered and Pretentious.

By WARD MOREHOUSE

Ferenc Molnar, an esteemed dramatist who has been recurrent in the New York theater ever since the somewhat confusing evening in 1908 when George Arliss and Edwin Stevens came forth as competitive Satans in simultaneous productions of his "The Devil," misses badly in "Miracle in the Mountains," which is described as a legend. The first performance was given last night at the Playhouse.

"Miracle in the Mountains," is an awkward, cluttered and pretentious play, and actually an offensive one. Molnar engages himself with a mixture of religion and melodrama as he brings in elements of "The Passing of the Third Floor Back" and "The Servant in the House," and with just a dash of "Madame X." There were moments last night when I half expected Walter Hampden to turn up in the wings.

Christ is symbolized in the Molnar fable in a hulking, shaggy lawyer, genially played by Victor Kilian, and the miracle of a Carpathian mountain village of a hundred years ago is that of the dead brought back to life to save a hired girl who has been falsely accused of the murder of her illegitimate son. The murderer, we are told early in the play, is the dastardly mayor of the village, who buried the body beneath a rose bush.

Some ordinarily competent players—Kilian, Julie Haydon, Frederic Tozere, Manart Kippen, Katherine Anderson—are wasted in Molnar's little tussle with faith, which had its first presentation in Budapest fourteen years ago. Archer King and Harrison Woodhull, actors turned producers, make the presentation at the Playhouse. Molnar has done his own staging, and has made a pretty clumsy job of it.

However moving and delicate "Miracle in the Mountains" may have been in its original production, the hour-and-a-half Molnar fable of justice done in the dark Carpathians is now a considerable botch. Two miracles will be needed to save it.

Two miracles will be needed to save it.

"Miracle in the Mountains"—continued

Daily Mirror

APRIL 26, 1947

New Molnar Drama Opens at Playhouse

By ROBERT COLEMAN

The new producing firm of Archer King and Harrison Woodhull brought to the Playhouse last evening "Miracle of the Mountains," a legend by Ferenc Molnar, which the author is credited with staging.

The locale is a town in the Carpathian Mountains of the Austro-Hungarian Empire of 100 years ago. The subject is justice, divine and temporal, with excursions into conscience, faith and reason.

It is Hungarian version of "The

Servant in the House," and, in our opinion, vastly inferior to that play. It has to do with a gentle, kindly, all-wise attorney, who comes to the rescue of a fiery and disliked slavey falsely accused of murdering her child.

The poor girl had been taken

into the home of the wealthy, important mayor of the town from an orphanage. There she had the child by the mayor. Later he cast both out. The girl then fell in love with a schoolmaster, whose parents opposed a marriage between them.

One day the boy tossed a rock at his father, the mayor, who tossed one back, killing his offspring. The mayor, now wed to a rich and titled woman, hid the child's body beneath a rose bush and permitted the mother to be unjustly tried for the crime.

During the trial the heavenly attorney sought to bring the Mayor to confession and repentance. Failing to do this, he softened the heart of a dour and prejudiced presiding judge, who permitted him the extraordinary privilege of enacting the play's final scene in a mountain glen where bloomed the rose bush.

There the dead boy was resurrected and carried off into the skies by the celestial advocate, as

news came from the town that the Mayor had gone raving mad as a result of not accepting divine guidance. The simple girl, the stern judge and a local attorney devoted to rationalism, knelt in awe at the miracle.

Goodness knows this quarrelsome world is sadly in need of faith. It has brought itself to the brink of extinction through its materialistic mind. But we doubt that "Miracle of the Mountains" will prove an effective advocate for faith, justice and tolerance.

Its purpose is highly commendable, but regrettably it lacks the emotional impact, dramatic skill and literary distinction required to achieve its worthy end.

The sponsors have engaged for the cast such capable players as Katherine Anderson, Frederic Tozere, Julie Haydon, E. A. Krumschmidt, Manart Kippen, Victor Kilian, John McKee, Bernard Randall and Dayton Lumma, but they are able to do little with or for the mediocre Molnar script.

Journal American

APRIL 26, 1947

'Miracle in Mountains' at the Playhouse

By ROBERT GARLAND

If the author of "Hamlet" could write "The Tempest" when past his prime as playwright, there's no reason why the author of "Lilith" shouldn't write "Miracle in the Mountains." He has written it, at any rate, and Archer King and Harrison Woodhull present it at The Playhouse. Which goes to show that, while Ferenc Molnar is no William Shakespeare, his last play need not confound him.

There's cause for worry when a playwright calls his composition something other than a play. For if a play is not a play, then what in the name of Broadway is it? Mr. Molnar insists that "Miracle in the Mountains" is a legend. My dictionary insists that a legend is an unbelievable story. Which is exact; what last night's new arrival is, an unconvincing narrative told unconvincingly.

Almost everything about "Miracle in the Mountains" is

more credible than its assets as a play. The Messrs. King and Woodhull, newcomers, as far as I know, to Broadway, have provided Mr. Molnar's legend with some actors who are excellent and some backgrounds that are impressive. To those, the creator of the fable has applied some direction which is a poor thing, but his own.

Sainted Stand-In

To even so amateur a churchman as this reporter, it's difficult to understand why the Almighty, or His sainted stand-in, should descend upon "a small town in the dark Carpathian Mountains" to save the life of a servant girl who had sinned against God and man deliberately. Cicely is a self-confessed child-beater and sleeper-out-of-bounds, yet heaven-ordered miracles are passed in her behalf.

Known simply as The Attor-

ney, the miracle-passer shows up at a monastery in which the sinning Cicely seeks sanctuary from her unsympathetic neighbors. He's mysterious about his coming and his going. And, because he is the kind Carpathian holy man discover divinity wrapped like a not-too-invisible cloak about him. So he lingers on to defend the head girl from her god-fellow townsmen.

This he does in a courtroom scene in which he speaks in riddles. Then, leading the judge to a mountain top where wild roses bloom, he resurrects the Little Boy who is the sinning Cicely's illegitimate offspring. Cicely has been accused of killing him. But she is cleared as the mysterious stranger carries him off to his heavenly home, leaving everybody flabbergasted and disbelieving.

Fine Performance

Only Julie Haydon—she who

made "The Glass Menagerie," "Shadow and Substance" and "The Time of Your Life" better than they could have been without her—seems to have any distinct idea what Ferenc Molnar is trying to say in his "Miracle in the Mountains." But, owing to the skill, beauty and sincerity of her playing, Mr. Molnar's sinning servant girl comes fitfully to life.

Victor Kilian acts sweet and low as the mysterious attorney. But his assignment is a tough one. Especially when, in the legend's final stanza, he is asked to take the hand of The Little Boy he has so recently resurrected and lead him off into the Great Blue Yonder of which our Army Air Corps is always singing. At the Playhouse, the curtain falls in the very nick of time.

E. A. Krumschmidt hovers around the outskirts of burlesque as the simple Simon of the plot's unfolding. Frederic Tozere suffers arrogantly as The Mayor who is the true father and the actual slayer of Cicely's unhalloved son. The others remain the others, with make-ups tending toward the comic. But, along with Miss Haydon's performance the settings and costumes by Robert Davison are impressive, even if Mr. Molnar's play is not.